

Support person information

During home detoxification, it is essential that the person undergoing treatment is supported by a partner or friend. During alcohol detoxification you can actively and safely participate as follows:

Safety

Your partner/friend may feel shaky or drowsy, especially in the early stages of detoxification. Therefore, it is important to make the home environment as safe as possible: supervise smoking, don't allow the person to pour hot water and ensure that they avoid swimming, unsupervised bathing, driving or operating machinery.

Hygiene

It is possible that your partner/friend may sweat excessively. This is not unusual. Assistance with washing may be helpful if difficulty is experienced.

Environment

During alcohol withdrawal, the nervous system occasionally gets over-excited. Your partner/friend may complain of extreme sensitivity to his/her surroundings (e.g. light, noises). He/she may also complain of feeling anxious and may appear irritable. If you think these problems are getting worse, please tell the Clinic.

Mood

If your partner/friend complains of feeling anxious or fearful or is unable to sleep, try to act in a reassuring manner and avoid unnecessary demands or stresses. If possible, discourage too much 'napping' during the day as this may prevent the person from sleeping at night. Sometimes withdrawal symptoms are worse at night. Your partner/friend may find it helpful if the light is kept on in the bedroom.

Hydration

In cases of excessive sweating and/or vomiting in the early stages of withdrawal, it is important that your partner/friend drinks plenty of fluids. Orange juice may irritate the stomach and cause nausea. Milk is better as it eases digestive problems and, of course, water is an excellent thirst

quencher. Sweet drinks, such as sweet tea or decaffeinated coffee should be encouraged to prevent the blood sugar from falling too low.

Eating

Encourage small meals (little and often) but don't worry if this is not possible in the first few days. The vitamin tablets given will help replace any lost vitamins. It is best to have food containing protein (e.g. fish, dairy products and vegetables) and vitamins (e.g. cereals, nuts, pulses, milk, cheese, liver, poultry, citrus fruits, tomatoes and potatoes) but nothing too rich or oily.

Drugs

A tranquilliser drug - diazepam (valium) may have been prescribed to increase safety and comfort during the withdrawal period. As with all drugs, this is potentially addictive. It is therefore important that the correct dose is given and only for a limited number of days (approximately 5-8 days).

Note: If any symptoms persist or appear to worsen, don't hesitate to Contact us

Withdrawal Fits

Very rarely withdrawal fits may occur. In the unlikely event of this happening, it is important that you follow a few simple rules.

First Call 000 immediately.

When a person is having a fit, the initial stage visible to you will be the collapse and shaking/twitching of the limbs and torso. This may appear dramatic and frightening but do not be tempted to intervene at this stage. You will be of more help to your partner/friend if you move any obstacles out of the way to prevent injury. This stage may last for a few seconds or a few minutes. During this time the person may appear to stop breathing and may go blue in the face and hands. This is natural and normal colour will be regained when the fit stops. In the majority of cases there is a full and quick recovery, with no long-term ill effects.

Here are a few Dos and Don'ts to help you:

- Don't try to restrict the person when he or she is having the fit.
- Don't put or force anything into the mouth when the person is having the fit. By doing so, you may cause damage to the teeth and mouth and, possibly, damage to your hands.

- Do remove any obstacles which the person may knock himself/herself on.
- After the fit has stopped, do check the mouth and make sure the airway is clear. If there are any obstructions, remove them.
- Do time the fit if possible.
- When the person has stopped 'fitting' he or she will go into a semi-conscious state. This is natural. Do ensure the breathing is normal and then lie the person on one side in a semi prone position. Ensure that that mouth is clear of any obstructions and place the head in such a way as to allow any fluids or vomit to run freely out without being inhaled. For a short time after waking the person may appear irritable and/or confused/disorientated. This is natural and will not last.
- Do allow the person time to come round completely, then make him/her comfortable and explain what has happened.
- Loss of muscle control during the fit may have caused incontinence, which will be embarrassing for your partner/friend. Do reassure them that this is all right and natural. As soon as your partner/friend feels able, assist with a change into comfortable, dry clothing.

For more advice or information please Contact us